

Emotional indicators associated with bullying behaviors victimization

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Abstract

Bullying is a specific expression of violence in the school environment that has become more relevant in recent decades, due to the appearance of new forms of violence. Experiences of bullying are associated with several social interactions, behavioral adjustment, emotional problems, mainly internalized problems such as anxiety, anxiety and anger.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the distress, anxiety, the expression of anger and the use of humor and its association with the roles of bullying and victimization in school situations in secondary school students from Mexico City.

406 high school students from Mexico City participated. The Reynolds RBVSS bullying victimization scales, the anger expression inventory and the humor styles questionnaire were applied to them. The data from this research confirm the association of expression of anger, agony, anxiety, and negative use of humor in bullying behaviors, in different ways in both bullies and victims.

Keywords: Bullying distress, anxiety, anger, humor styles

1. Theoretical support.

Violence is an interpersonal process that affects at least two actors: the person who suffers it and the person who exercises it (Castro, 2009); it can have both physical and psychological expressions. The World Health Organization classifies it into three types, according to the characteristics of those who commit the act of violence: self-inflicted violence, such as suicidal behavior and self-harm; Interpersonal violence, that imposed by an individual or a small group of individuals, and collective violence, inflicted by large groups such as the State, troops or terrorists (OMS, 2003).

At the interpersonal level, two subcategories can be located: family or partner, and community violence. The latter is done in unrelated people, usually outside the home. Within community violence, situations of violence that occur in school can be located, specifically acts of violence that students carry out among themselves, which are conceptualized as bullying or bullying.

Aggression between equals at school is a permanent and old phenomenon that has been the subject of systematic research since the 1970s: One or more students intentionally and systematically harass and attack other students, in the face of essential look of the other colleagues, this phenomenon is called Bullying, (Olweus,1996) danish origin concept. In Spanish, the most appropriate term is bullying or bullying between equals. The manifestations of harassment range from insults, harassment to physical

attacks. It contemplates three characteristics: intentionality, persistence over time and abuse of power. It is important to reiterate that, to be conceptualized as bullying, the violence exerted by the bully is fully intentional, it does not refer to a single event but to a series of events that take place over a period of time and the bully is perceived with greater power over the victim, whether physical, psychological or social. This apparent power is used inappropriately to cause harm to others.

The targets of bullies at school are typically other students, consequently the term victim refers to the student who has experienced a relevant amount of bullying by another student or multiple students. While there may be people with typical bullying behaviors or people with typical victim behaviors, sometimes the bullies themselves are the targets of the bullying, thus creating a student who is both a bully and a victim. This creates a circular phenomenon where participants can change roles or be both at the same time, which is why Reynolds (2017) refers to the phenomenon as bully victimization.

This specific expression of violence in the school environment has become more relevant in recent decades, due to the emergence of new forms of violence. Indeed, although bullying is not a new phenomenon, its peculiarity and interest in its study is due to the fact that it constantly presents new forms, expressions and resources, ranging from physical violence, intimidation, to exclusion or segregation, and either in person or even in modalities that involve the use of digital technologies, mainly through social networks (Wade & Beran, 2011).

Provoke fights and videotaping them to upload them to the network, or photographing the privacy of others, sending or receiving offensive and insulting and personalized messages on social networks, are new expressions of violence, which are becoming increasingly harsh, and can even go from one joke, a game, to activities that involve severe physical harm.

Another peculiarity of bullying is its presence worldwide, practically in all schools there are situations of bullying, with negative social and personal consequences, which has implied that it is considered as a public and mental health problem worldwide (Hamburger, Basile & Vivolo 2011) as it is risky behavior that affects the physical, mental and social integrity of those involved in different degrees and forms, with serious consequences at a personal and group level that affects the school community, the family and society in general (Asabey, 2015).

One of the great concerns is that these previously mentioned behaviors can potentiate or be directly associated with physical injuries, psychological conditions and even suicides or death events in adolescents (Srabstein, 2013). A study carried out by the Pan American Health Organization, in all the countries of the American continent, was able to document in 2012, 82 cases of injuries related to bullying in people between 5 and 19 years of age, of which 47 cases were injuries, 17 suicide cases and 18 homicides (Srabstein, 2013).

There are many affectations of a psychological order, as a consequence of the situations of harassment

victimization, Reynolds (2000) indicates that the experiences of intimidation are associated with a series of problems of social interaction, behavioral adjustment, emotional, mainly internalized problems, including anxiety, anxiety and anger.

One of the most damaging effects of bullying is emotional distress on the victim, which often have a significant impact. Internalizing disorders are those psychological disorders and problems that have as primary symptoms of expression, behaviors, affects and thoughts that are directed inward and that are a source of distress for the individual (Romero, Lucio, Duran & Ruiz, 2017).

Both victims and bullies present high levels of distress, with internalizing symptoms such as fear or sadness, even depression, or with externalizing symptoms such as anger and hostility (Reynolds, 2017). Anger and depression are related to a history of bullying victimization (Ruiz, Torres &, Ochoa, 2017). The form the answer can take differs from student to student. In some it can be expressed by fear or sadness, in others by anger or aggression, and in some by both, internalizing and externalizing symptoms of distress.

On the other hand, anxiety is a cognitive assessment that causes an emotional state of uneasiness or very intense restlessness, in the school environment, it is one of the most harmful consequences of bullying (Albores Gallo, Saucedo-García, Ruiz-Velasco & Roque -Santiago (2011). Research has also shown that victims of bullying present greater concern, negative self-evaluations, and rejection of the school, due to fears about their safety (Reynolds, 2017).

For Ruiz-Badillo and Reyes Lagunes, (2007) anger is an emotional state characterized by subjective feelings that vary in intensity, from annoyance or irritation to fury, rage or intense anger, it is a complex reaction, which mixes mental activities and bodily, depends on personal contexts, and even sociocultural. Hostility is a complex apparatus of angry feelings and attitudes that motivates aggressive behavior. Aggression is used to describe negative behavior loaded with anger and hostility that is generally destructive and punitive.

Harassment situations are often started with jokes or games, easily override their humor, and turn into aggression. Humor is a personality trait that can be reinforced from the environment, its use can achieve a balance, by compensating external pressures, mainly humor is used as the ability to joyfully recognize the incongruous, to see the adversity of a benign way and to provoke laughter in others or experience it yourself (Seligman, 2002). On the contrary, the use of humor can be used in a negative context either to disqualify and denounce the attributes of others, or even as a form of aggressiveness to criticize, annoy or manipulate others (Cayssials, Dana, & Pérez, 2006). In a social environment mediated by aggression, young people who are bullies tend to use humor in the negative sense as a resource to victimize others and legitimize their internal anger.

Young people involved in bullying situations, either as bullies or as victims, constitute a risk group among students, in large part due to their significant potential for suffering mental health problems, distress , and

anger, as well as the effects to long-term violence at school. Therefore, it is important to study these states and personality traits in the Mexican school population.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the distress, anxiety, expression of anger and use of humor and its association with the roles of bullying and victimization in school situations in secondary school students from Mexico City.

2. Method.

2.1 Participants.

Participated in the study, 406 high school students, 207 women (51%) and 199 men (49%), aged 13 to 16 years, median age 14, standard deviation 0.884. Students from public secondary schools in the southern part of Mexico City. The form of selection of the participants was by an intentional non-probability sampling. With the prior agreement of the school authorities, the classrooms were visited and the instruments were administered in a group, covering relatively equal quotas by sex and applied (RBVSS and expression of state trait Anger or RBVSS Humor Styles Questionnaire).

2.2 Materials and Instruments.

The Reynolds Bully Victimization Scales for Schools RBVSS. It is made up of Bully Victimization Scale (BVS), the Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS) and the School Violence Anxiety Scale (SVAS), with the Spanish translation and psychometric adaptation for the Mexican population carried out by Ruiz Badillo (2017).

The EBV Bullying Victimization Scale has 46 items, composed of two dimensions, the first assesses the role of the bully, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.88$, The second dimension assesses the role of the victim ($\alpha = 0.89$). The BVDS Bully-Victimization Distress Scale measure internal distress because of Bullying Victimization ($\alpha = 0.92$) and external distress because of Bullying Victimization ($\alpha = 0.88$), with 35 items. The third scale is School Violence Anxiety Scale SVAS ($\alpha = 0.94$), composed of 29 items that assesses anxiety towards bullying and school violence. All items are presented in a Likert format with four intervals with response options that indicate the frequency of each indicator in the last month: never, once or twice, three or four times, and five or more times. This instrument was applied to all participants.

A second instrument used was the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory, adapted to the Mexican population (Ruiz-Badillo and Reyes-Lagunes, 2007). Made up of five factors; Anger State ($\alpha = 0.74$), which evaluates the condition of anger at the moment of answering the instrument; Anger Trait Temperament, which evaluates the anger trait ($\alpha = 0.88$); Manifest Anger, which evaluates the expression of anger ($\alpha = 0.73$); Content Anger, which evaluates the opposite of the previous one, the containment of anger ($\alpha = 0.78$) and Reaction Anger, which evaluates the impulsive reaction when angry ($\alpha = 0.78$). In total 22 items, with a total Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.82$.

A third instrument to assess humor, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) scale was used, by Puhlik-

Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir (2003) in the version translated into Spanish by Cayssials, Dana, & Pérez (2006). It consists of 32 items grouped in four dimensions, each with 8 items: affiliative, personal improvement, aggressiveness, and personal disqualification, the first two represent a positive use of humor and the next two indicate a negative use of humor. The Spanish version presents a reliability of the total test with a Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = .79$. For the present investigation, some reagents were modified to adapt them to the way of speaking of Mexicans, for example; the reagent "If someone makes a mistake, I try to spend or charge him" was replaced by the following reagent "If someone makes a mistake, I make fun of him."

Alternately with the base instrument (Reynolds Scales), a measure of expression of anger was applied to 203 participants and another 203 participants a measure of use of humor. Socioeconomic data was applied to all the interviewees.

2.3 Process

With the prior consent of school authorities and secondary school teachers, it was applied to students collectively in natural school groups. Voluntary participation was requested (no student refused to participate) indicating that the study would be anonymous and confidential, and the information obtained would be grouped for statistical purposes. An email address was provided to contact the investigators in case of questions.

The questionnaire consisting of the base instrument and one of the two instruments indicated above was randomly distributed to each student. Thus, 203 responses were obtained from the Reynolds scales and the anger measure and 203 responses from the Reynolds scales and the humor measure.

As an ethical aspect to give back to the population where the study was carried out, a document was offered to the school authorities with the diagnosis of the situation about bullying that occurred in these settings, without specifying names, and actors since the questionnaire was applied with the consent of confidential and anonymous handling.

The responses were processed and analyzed in two databases, one containing the evaluations of bullying, victimization and anger and the other with the evaluations of bullying humor, with them the information was analyzed through the statistical program SPSS see 21®, using frequencies simple, group comparisons and correlations with non-parametric statistics, because the data are not normally distributed and were obtained by non-probability sampling.

3. Results

The socioeconomic characteristics of the participants indicate that they belong to a preferably medium and low social condition, just over half live in rented house. It should be noted that 30% of students live in a single-parent family.

Under the cut-off points set by the Bully Victimization Scale, 104 participants (25.6%) were identified, involved Bullying situations, of which 52 (12.8%) are exclusively Bully or stalker, and 52 (12.8%) are exclusively Victims. 23 students (5.6%) exhibit behaviors such as Bully and victims. For comparison purposes, students be clasified Bully or victims.

By grouping by sex of the interviewees, 28 men and 24 women were found with the role of Bully, while 20 men and 32 women in the role of victims. It should be noted that there are a higher number of victims of the female sex.

El 46.7% of bullying students, and 59% of female victims use video games, 73% of bullies and 77% of victims use social media. El 53% of bullies refer to frequently watching videos of student fights, while only 22% of victims watch this type of video.

As for coexistence, there are some negative situations; 53% of bullies and 50% of victims refer to having a bad relationship at home. 33% of bullies and 32% of victims refer badly to the father. In school, 26% of bullies and 36% of victims refer to having poor coexistence in their school classroom.

When making comparisons between students identified as bullies and non-Bullies, it was found that there are statistically significant differences in applying Mann-Whitney U Test which shows high levels of Internalized distress, Externalized distress, and total distress (which is the sum of the above markers), and anxiety about school violence, in students identified as bullies, compared to non-harassing students (See Table 1).

Table 1 Comparison of Distress and Anxiety in Bully and Non-Bully

Factor	Bully		Non-Bully		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE			
Internalized Distress	9.3929	11.855	2.7486	5.696	1387.500	-3.841	.000
Externalized Distress	13.5000	11.390	2.9600	4.226	679.500	-6.278	.003
Total Distress	22.8929	21.611	5.7086	8.831	796.500	-5.796	.000
Anxiety about school violence	12.75	15.255	4.74	8.044	1393.500	-3.711	.000

Similarly, in comparisons between students identified as victims and non-victims, it was found that there are statistically significant differences in applying Mann's U non-parametric test, which shows high levels of Internalized distress, Externalized distress and total distress (which is the sum of the above markers), and anxiety about school violence, in students identified as victims, compared to non-victim students (See Table 2).

Table 2 Comparison of Distress and Anxiety in Victims and Not Victims

Factor	Victims		No victims		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Internalized Distress	14.285	13.249	1.9657	3.477	560.500	-6.831	.000
Externalized Distress	14.928	10.381	2.7314	4.006	372.000	-7.368	.000
Total Distress	29.214	20.442	4.6971	6.572	318.000	-7.473	.000
Anxiety about school violence	17.00	19.909	4.06	4.999	1315.000	-3.984	.000

Regarding the measure of anger, comparisons were made between students identified as bullying and non-bullying, showing high levels of state anger, temperament trait anger, manifest anger, content anger and reaction trait anger in students identified as bullying, in comparison with non-bullying students. In all these comparisons statistically significant differences were found when applying the non-parametric Mann's U test, (See Table 3).

Table 3 Comparison of Anger Expression in Bully and Not Bully

Factor	Bully		Non-Bully		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Anger state	2.2000	.901	1.5086	.681	1215.500	-4.373	.000
Anger temperament trait	2.5286	.955	1.9771	.823	1599.000	-2.964	.003
Manifest anger	2.4357	.812	1.7211	.661	1216.500	-4.300	.000
Contained anger	2.3214	.957	1.6895	.782	1465.000	-3.490	.000
Anger trait reaction	2.6607	.773	2.0586	.771	1410.500	-3.621	.000

Likewise, comparisons were made between students identified as victims and non-victims, in the measure of anger, where high levels of state anger, temperament trait anger, manifest anger, content anger and reaction trait anger in students identified as victims were made. compared to non-victimized students. In all these comparisons statistically significant differences were found when applying the non-parametric Mann's U test (See Table 4).

Table 4 Comparison of Anger Expression in Victims and Not Victims

Factor	Victims		No victims		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Anger state	2.2286	1.001	1.5040	.654	1430.000	-3.613	.000
Anger temperament trait	2.6000	.870	1.9657	.830	1405.000	-3.639	.000
Manifest anger	2.4286	.778	1.7223	.669	1193.500	-4.380	.000
Contained anger	2.4286	.924	1.6724	.773	1268.000	-4.188	.000
Anger trait reaction	2.6429	.749	2.0614	.776	1435.500	-3.536	.000

Comparisons between students identified as bullies and non-bullies in humor styles, when applying Mann's U nons parametric test, were found to be statistically significant differences in styles of aggression and personal disqualification, where students identified as bullies are shown high levels, compared to non-harassing students (see Table 5). The positive affiliation and personal improvement factors showed no differences between the two groups.

Table 5 Comparison of Humor Styles between Bully and Non-Bully

Factor	Bully		Non-Bully		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Affiliate	2.854	.352	2.861	.297	2114.500	-.125	.901
Personal Improvement	2.365	.578	2.377	.691	2098.00	-.185	.853
Aggressiveness	2.432	.366	2.283	.369	1571.000	-2.152	.031
Personal disqualification	2.125	.520	1.733	.426	1142.000	-3.758	.000

Comparisons between students identified as victims and non-victims in humor styles, when applying Mann's U non-parametric test, were found to be statistically significant differences only in personal disqualification styles, where students identified as victims show high levels, compared to non-victim students (see Table 6). It should be noted that in the affiliation and personal improvement positive factors the scores of non-victim students, have higher averages, which implies a trend and on the contrary the negative factors are most used by the students identified as bullies.

Table 6 Comparison of Victim and Non-Victim Humor Styles

Factor	Victim		No victim		Mann-Whitney U	Z	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Affiliate	2.776	.363	2.872	.293	1789.500	-1.338	.181
Personal Improvement	2.182	.644	2.402	.680	1746.500	-1.489	.136
Aggressiveness	2.370	.455	2.291	.359	1733.500	-1.546	.122
Personal disqualification	1.995	.572	1.750	.430	1582.500	-2.113	.035

To identify the impact and strength of these comparisons, non-parametric correlations were made using Spearman's Rho statistic, finding a relationship between the expression of anger and the role assumed in situations of harassment: bullying behavior – manifest anger ($Rho = .361, p = 0.02$), victim – anger content ($Rho = .268, p = 0.05$). It should be noted that overt anger implies hostile behavior, and therefore an active form. In opposition, contained anger is passively hostile behavior.

There is a relationship between the use of humor and the role of harassment: The bullying behavior correlated positively to the dimension of aggressive humor, ($Rho = .305, p = 0.01$) and personal disqualification ($Rho = .243, p = 0.01$) and in the case of victim role correlates negatively with the mood dimension for personal improvement ($Rho = .292, p = 0.05$). On the other hand, students who do not participate in this circle of violence use humor in a positive sense, so that as Seligman argues (2002), it allows them to improve their interactions and their own person. The phenomenon of bullying is manifested mainly through the making of jokes, taunts, and insults, that is, in the use of humor in a negative way.

4. Discussion.

In bullying there are mainly two types of protagonists, bullies and victims. In this study, students considered bullies present an externalized distress characterized by a lack of social skills, lack of empathy, with polarized emotional expressions; Their trait is anger, they are aggressive and hostile towards others, according to the data obtained, they use humor to insult and attack others, they usually disguise their condition before adults. Their behavior may be the consequence of a bad family relationship and lack of affection at home, and permissiveness of aggressive behaviors from an early age, lack of limits, or family education based on physical punishment. Due to the above considerations, an inadequate coexistence at home and at school, and the excessive use of digital media in a negative way, are factors that induce aggression between equals.

On the other hand, students considered as victims, present high levels of internalized anguish and anxiety towards school, they can have various personality patterns: some are passive and submissive, and others are anxious and aggressive. They have an expression of contained anger, possibly a consequence of internalized anxiety, and they can even use humor, but as a resource to self-abuse. Victims are often alone and apart from their schoolmates and report a bad family relationship.

The data in this investigation confirm the association of anger expression, anxiety, and negative use of humor in bullying behaviors, in different ways both bullies and victims.

The study, evaluation and intervention of anger in adolescents, is a substantive activity that would provide elements for the future of aggressive behaviors and situations of harassment and promote the regulation and control of anger and thereby strengthen personality in the teens. The scale of the problem downs the capacity of the protagonists, so it has to be worked as a school community, made up of parents, teachers and students. Given the complexity of the phenomenon, it is desirable to make several recommendations for its prevention.

Among them is the increase in the coexistence between parents and children, which has decreased considerably, often because both parents work and have little time to live with children. Maintain an everyday dialogue with children, mainly listen to them, and promote themselves to express the meaning and consequence of their actions, both positive and negative.

Prioritize conversations about the meaning and messages of the information the child receives, as well as responsibility and consequences for the use of means such as the internet and the use of digital networks. Avoid ambiguity between the standards and behaviors of both parents, teachers, and students. That is, to maintain a congruence between what is said and what is done.

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